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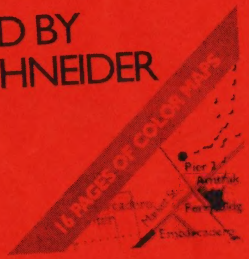

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RAIL TRAVEL NEWS

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ISSUE NO. 534
NEWS THROUGH
OCTOBER 15, 1995

- SUNSET LIMITED SABOTAGE
- HOUSTON TEXAS EAGLE'S LAST RUNS
- RIDING THE ALGOMA CENTRAL
- THE CIRCUMVESUVIANA RAILWAY

ON THE COVER

Private car "John L. Radovich, Jr." prepares to be coupled to the rear of Amtrak train 521, the Houston section of the TEXAS EAGLE, for the train's last run to Houston on Sep 9. The scene is Dallas Union Station, and the private car has just been delivered to the station by the DG&No from storage. The car is two-tone red with white top. To halftone film, red in a color print is seen as black, and subtle differences in red shading blend into each other. Therefore, our cover photo does not show the car to best advantage.

(Rear cover:) Amtrak TEXAS EAGLE no. 522 backs into the Houston station to load for its last run to Dallas on Sep 10. Photos by John Radovich.

See Dr. Dan Monaghan's trip report in this issue on the last runs of these two trains (nos. 521 and 522).

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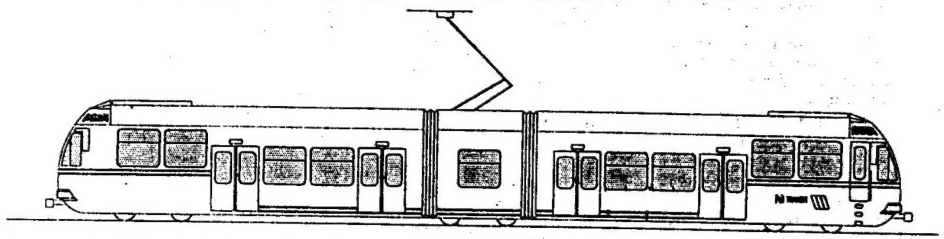
EAST COAST REPORT



NJ TRANSIT UNVEILS DESIGN FOR HUDSON RIVER-WATERFRONT LRT

by Bruce J. Russell

NJ TRANSIT has recently provided the news media with a line drawing of the light rail vehicle (LRV) to be used on its Hudson-Waterfront light rail line, construction of which will begin in 1996, with the first segment finished in 1999.

The sketch indicates that the car will consist of six axles and two articulation joints, creating a small center section. It will be 70% low-floor. Only the end portions will feature normal floor height. In many respects this streamlined LRV will bear a striking resemblance to that currently being operated in Grenoble, France, as well as Paris. This is considered one of the best in the world, and is manufactured by the French firm of Alsthom. Requirements for the handicapped are satisfied, yet the axles are not so low that speeds are restricted to a slow crawl. Use of this design means that high-level boarding platforms can be dispenses with. When the Hudson-Waterfront light rail line was first proposed, there were plans to use high-level boarding. The mayors of the towns and cities through which it would run raised objections on the grounds that such structures were unsightly. Hence NJ Transit returned to the drawing board and the result is a vehicle with a low-floor central portion which can easily be accessed by people in wheelchairs.

The proposed LRV is fitted with two cabs and draws 750 volts direct current from a roof-mounted pantograph. It can operate as a single unit or as part of a multi-car train. Couplers are provided for this purpose. Once revenue service begins over the phase-one segment from Bayonne to Hoboken Terminal, ridership is estimated to be approximately 30,000 per day, gradually increasing to over 100,000.

Phase two will see service extended another 10 miles to Ridgefield Park. Seating will be comfortable and there will be plenty of upright supports for the benefit of standees. Two fully-loaded LRVs will be capable of handling over 200 passengers. However, the goal will be to have enough cars on the line that everyone will be assured a seat. One of the stated aims of the service is to draw people away from exclusive dependence on private automobiles.

This futuristic-looking car, a late 20th Century version of the interurbans of yesteryear, is a compromise. It is designed to be able to move at slow to moderate speeds on city streets in Hoboken and elsewhere, but accelerate quickly to at least 50 mph once private right-of-way tracks are reached.

The Hudson-Waterfront light rail line will feature both varieties of alignment. The private rights-of-way will be composed of former Jersey Central and West Shore trackage plus at the northern end some ex-Erie rails. The interurbans had the capacity to move with perfect ease from local streets to standard railroad trackage. The vehicles of the Hudson-Waterfront light rail line will do likewise. In effect, an old concept is being reinvented.

NJ Transit is considering use of a single design for both its Hudson River-Waterfront LRT as well as one of the planned routes in South Jersey. A variation will likewise replace the 50-year-old PCCs on the Newark City Subway for which extensions are presently in the planning stage.

* * *

METRO-NORTH SAID that September was a "great month" in terms of performance. Systemwide, the on-time record was 97%, and year-to-date it was 96.2%, or 0.2% better than M-N's 2003 Strategic Business Plan goal of 96% for 1995.

As of August, Metro-North this year had provided 40,559,950 rides and had taken in $171,916,014. Both of these totals were up about 1% from 1994, M-N said. For the month of August alone, M-N provided 5,229,349 rides (almost the same as Aug 1994), and took in $21,972,940 or 0.3% more than in Aug 1994.

"Take the train to the Pope" was the way Metro-North phrased it in listing extra inbound trains added for the occasion of the Pope's Mass in Central Park on Oct 7. There were six such trains: a 4:12am train from Poughkeepsie, a 4:36am departure from Croton-Harmon, a 4:08am train from Brewster North, a train from North White Plains at 4:31am, and two trains from Stamford, leaving at 4:10am and 5am.

SHORE LINE EAST fares will increase 27% on Nov 1 rather than the 53% that was proposed earlier. Also, the second round of fare increases has been delayed from July 1996 to January 1997. Branford-New Haven monthly fare will increase $6.00 to $38.00, and in January 1997 it will increase by another $4.00 to $42.00. The proposed fares had been $49.00 and $56.00 respectively. Current one-way and ten-trip fares will see no increase this November.

CONRAIL FREIGHT TRAIN SENE9 on Sep 29 struck and killed a trespasser on the Boston & Albany line at Trap Rock a few miles west of Springfield MA. As a result, train 448, the LAKE SHORE LIMITED, was delayed 2hrs, 6mins and train 449 was delayed 1hr, 23mins. Train 479 left Springfield 30 mins late waiting for connecting passengers off train 448.

THE TIDEWATER EXPRESS, train 93, on Sep 30, consisting of AEM7 932 and six cars, came to a stop at Trenton and was unable to release the brakes due to damage caused by striking unknown debris on the tracks. The train was terminated at Trenton and 100 passengers were transferred to train 19 and an additional 170 were put on train 85.

THE ADIRONDACK, train 70 on Oct 1, consisting of new Genesis unit 707 and eight cars, struck a deer north of the station at Hudson on the Conrail line. The train rolled to a stop at the Hudson station and was terminated there with traction motor and train line problems. The following train, no. 288, which had been delayed 25 mins adding engine 488 (an FL9) at Albany, stopped and picked up passengers of no. 70 with an additional delay of 17mins. Train 179 was delayed 36mins leaving New York holding for passengers off train 288.

—Bob Underwood.

SEPTA WAS HOLDING its 1995 Trolley Fest Oct 21-22 at Market East Station, 12th and Filbert Streets, in Philadelphia. We got this info too late to publish earlier. Rides on vintage trolleys would be the highlight. There were five varieties of these: restored PCC cars in original PRT, PTC and Red Arrow colors, boarded at 12th & Arch; Quaker City trolley trips: to South Phila. aboard a 1926 Peter Witt car and to Germantown & Erie Avenues on a 1981 LRV; Southwest Shuttle: PCC car trips between Woodland Shop and Elmwood District; Chestnut Hill: there and Mt. Airy aboard a PCC in PTC green-and-cream; and Buckingham Valley Trolley Ass'n: ride along Penn's Landing on the Association's historic cars.

BOSTON'S MBTA ANNOUNCED recently that it will build a 41-mile commuter rail extension of the Attleboro line to New Bedford and Fall River. Construction of the $156 million extension will begin in June 1996 for a fall 1997 opening. Also, MBTA will extend the Stoughton line 2½miles to North Easton, at a construction cost of $16.8 million.

VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS officials said in late Sep that they want to serve food and drink on their trains. VRE can refurbish four recently-purchased MBTA cars into food service cars. Whether the service would be by a counter in the car, by pushcart service, or by vending machines had not been decided. But officials are sure that they want the service to pay for itself—they don't want to subsidize it. Talks are being held with private food vendors. Alcohol probably would not be served, unless the vendor needed its sales to make a profit. The service would go onto both of the VRE commuter lines.

• • •

A WOMAN AT the Lawrence St subway station in Brooklyn on Sep 21 fainted and fell onto the tracks in front of an approaching southbound R-train at 8:30am. She fell between the tracks and the train passed over her without harming her. She suffered only bruises from the fall to the roadbed.

OFFICIALS OF THE Virginia Railway Express were told in Sep by their consultant that the price tag of $100 million asked by Norfolk Southern RR for the commuter line to Manassas is unrealistically high. VRE also does not have that much money. VRE rents the line for $1.5 million per year from the railroad. The consultant told the VRE board that he will make another recommendation in February. A worst-case scenario, officials said, was possible discontinuance of the service if the railroad tne commuter officials cannot reach an agreement. NS would find it more profitable to sell the line and pay rent to VRE for its use, and they are aggressively pushing the proposed sale.

• • •

NORTH CAROLINA SHOULD take full ownership of the North Carolina Railroad (over which operates the state's PIEDMONT and Amtrak's CRESCENT and CAROLINIAN), according to the think tank N.C. Center for Public Policy Research. The state owns 75% and private stockholders 25% of the line. Reports said that directors of the NC Railroad reached a tentative agreement with Norfolk Southern to give NS a 30-year lease on the line at $8 million per year. The think tank said that "[the railroad's] awkward ownership structure prevents the state from using the railroad to its full economic potential and keeps the public business behind closed doors." The private shareholders are challenging the agreement with NS in court. The state built the railroad in the 1850s and later turned its operation over to private companies.

STUCK TRUCK STRUCK: On Oct 3 Metro-North train 1933 "Waterbug" 6:35am out of Waterbury CT was involved in a grade crossing collision that injured 22 of the approximately 70 on the train. The accident occurred at Plains Road in Milford. A tractor-trailer carrying a backhoe to a work site became stuck on the crossing, which has an up-grade on either side to track level. As workers were trying to jack up the trailer, the train, running cab car first, came around the bend. The engineer applied emergency brakes and ran into the lead car shouting a warning to passengers. The train hit the truck, and according to one witness the cars jumped into the air in an inverted-V-shaped movement, then came down on top of the trailer.

Train service was operated with buses the rest of the day, and Providence & Worcester freight train CT2 New Haven-Danbury that evening was cancelled. The story made the first page of the New Haven Register the following day in spite of blaring headlines of the OJ Simpson trial verdict. TV news pictured the cab car with a very crumpled fireman's side. The train cars remained upright.

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AMTRAK CLOSED THE Springfield line Oct 2-3 for bridge deck renewal on the single-track line at Field and New (Enfield and Newington). On Oct 2 the only trains to operate were train 141 the BANKERS, train 13 the FAST MAIL, and train 471, the MAYFLOWER. That evening, all mail was unloaded at New Haven and trucked to Springfield. The following morning, train 13 left New Haven about 1:45 late after all mail was trucked from Springfield and loaded onto the train. A friend told me that the parking lot at the west end of the New Haven station was full of mail trucks.

On Oct 2 train 55, the VERMONTER, was terminated at Brattleboro, where passengers and luggage were handled by two Vermont Transit buses. All service between New Haven and Springfield was handled by Dattco buses.

Train 56 that day arrived New Haven with the following consist: AEM 7 928, coach 44271, dinette 48224, coach 44264 and baggage 1801. The train arrived on track 4, the engine cut off and ran around to the other end of the train, and then the protect crew swung the train over to track 9 in the station to await departure time.

On Oct 3 train 56 came in on track 9 with the exact same consist as on Oct 2 and the engine ran around for train 55. Track 9 is closest to the station, but the train stopped at the east end of the platform. The inbound conductor and I both thought the train should have stopped at the west end of the platform. The passengers could then have walked down the ramp at the end of the high-level platform, along the low platform to the crosswalk, across track 9 and right into the parking lot where the buses were. This would have avoided all stairs and escalators. There was plenty of help from baggage personnel as they had a fork lift towing a large baggage cart as well as the two golf carts.

Train 55 on Oct 3 was turned at Springfield, so I was told, and no Vermont Transit buses were used. It's interesting to see a Dattco or other bus arrive and see Amtrak conductors get off. Train 55 this day had two unboxed bicycles which were handled by the buses. The train left New Haven for Washington 17mins late—not bad.

—Bob Underwood.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Until I signed on as a passenger, the appeal of the [Napa Valley] wine train was a mystery. It is enormously popular with visitors, if not with Napa Valley residents. Too much noise and too many diesel fumes, grumble wineries with vines near the tracks. Yet beside the incessant auto and truck traffic on Highway 29, it seems almost environmentally benign. And as a rider I discover that it is a more relaxing way to enjoy the scenery than from a car... My companions, who have eaten in many Valley restaurants, give their verdict: They can't wait to take the wine train again."

—Caroline Bates in Gourmet magazine, July.

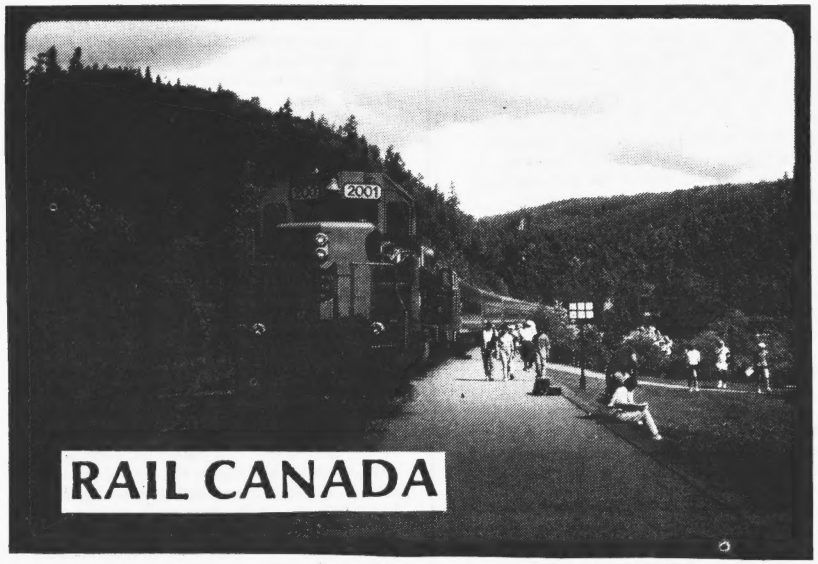
"When traveling by train in this country I do not attempt to drink wine, for it's usually a disaster; but as the countryside speeds by, I happily sip my vodka with ice and lots of water and read in this all-too-brief moment of peace... I would love American trains to go back to those wonderful dining cars that offered seatings, crisp linens, and good, simple food. If I could roll back the clock, French airplanes would have marvelous bread once more, and all trains, planes, and hotels would offer good cheese to go with excellent wines. Salad dressing in nasty plastic packets would be replaced by wine vinegar and olive oil. I would gladly pay more."

—Barbara Kafka in Gourmet magazine, July.

"The Senate Commerce Committee approved the idea of earmarking the money [a half-cent of gas tax] for Amtrak. But in the House, the chairman of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Bud Shuster, Republican of Pennsylvania, is not warm to the idea.

" 'Taking money out of the highway truck fund for Amtrak violates a basic commitment that we made, the first contract with America,' he said. 'It was between Dwight Eisenhower and the Congress, and it was, you pay your gasoline tax and we'll use that money to improve the nation's highways and bridges.' "

—Matthew L. Wald in New York Times, Oct 8.



RAIL CANADA

Algoma Central Railway train 4 poses at Agawa Canyon, Ontario on Aug 2. Read below Duane W. Roller's trip report on this scenic train ride. Photo by the author.

TRANSPORT 2000 CANADA is asking for donations to deal with a building crisis in Canadian rail passenger service: In an Oct 7 announcement, Transport 2000 said that Transport Minister Doug Young has announced a review of VIA Rail Canada. Privatization is on the agenda of the review that will decide VIA's fate within a year. VIA's federal funding budget, which was over $600 million in 1988, has been cut to $300 million, and under current plans will be cut to $204 million by 1997. Cuts in service are required to meet the current targets. The future of the whole system is in doubt under the privatization proposal. A confidential report by Transport Canada (the ministry of transport) indicates that the Trans-Canada rail service and Atlantic Canada rail service would not survive without subsidies. Service to Sarnia and Niagara Falls probably would not survive even under the current budget cuts. The corridor services would not survive in their current form under privatization. Corridor ticket prices would have to increase, threatening the viability of passenger volumes. Simply put, this review could see the end of rail passenger service in Canada.

To help Transport 2000 deal with this crisis, please send your donations to: Transport 2000, Box 858, Station B, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5P9.

A LONG TRUCK cannot safely cross a railway track if it starts from a dead stop, a study by Transport Canada has found. The finding is an outcome of an investigation into a 1991 accident in Alberta that killed a truck driver and three railway employees. The truck, a double trailer truck carrying crude oil, was unable to cross a rail track before being hit by a CN freight train. This problem could be amplified by the North American Free Trade Agreement. Truckers are proposing to set up north-south corridors for longer combination trucks that currently are not allowed in every jurisdiction.

THE PROPOSED CANADA Transportation Act, Bill C101, now before the House of Commons, has caused questions to be raised about the funding of non-VIA service: Quebec North Shore & Labrador; Ontario Northland; and Algoma Central. Under present law, these must apply to the NTA to abandon service in order for the government to provide a 60% subsidy. This provision has been deleted from the new act. But in late Sep, the Minister of Transport said that the proposed Act gives the government authority to enter into special agreements to provide assistance to them. "THis authority would be used," he said, "to ensure that non-VIA rail passenger services are maintained."

A DAY ON THE ALGOMA CENTRAL

by Duane W. Roller

The Algoma Central, running straight north 296 miles from Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, has operated a virtually unchanged passenger service for the last 30 years. My only previous trip on the line was in the early 1970s, and it was time for a return visit, this time on the Agawa Canyon tour train.

We crossed the International Bridge on a fine late-summer day, cleared customs quickly, and found ourselves in downtown Sault Ste. Marie. Since my last visit, the

(continued on page 19)

WEST COAST REPORT

MOUNT BAKER INTERNATIONAL is shown in the photo above. The train runs between Seattle WA and Vancouver BC, using Talgo Train equipment made in Spain. Rumors are flying in the Pacific Northwest about a possible second Seattle-Vancouver train coming possibly soon.

THE COAST STARLIGHT in the off-season, as of the end of Sep, is still running three sleepers. The EMPIRE BUILDER has its two sleepers still, but has lost a coach-baggage car from its regular consist.

CALTRAIN OFFICIALS said that their next community workshop on the extension of the trains into downtown San Francisco will probably be in October. The project has "overwhelming public support", they said; their newsletter mailing list has grown from about 1000 to 2700. With public input, some changes in their plans have been made. They said they are removing Brannan St as an alignment for the route and focusing instead on Townsend or King Sts. They will look at the analysis of building a new terminal on the existing Transbay Terminal site, to replace the remodeling option. In the new alternative, two options are being studied: CalTrain on an aerial alignment to the new terminal and CalTrain in an underground alignment. They will also study putting a CalTrain portal at 7th St, besides one near 4th St. About 150 people attended earlier workshops this summer.

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THE MOUNT RAINIER train will be renamed the CASCADIA on Oct 29, and it will receive checked baggage service at that time. Reportedly Oregon Senator Mark Hatfield wanted some Oregon recognition in the train which serves both his state and Washington but bore a Washington place name. At a mid-Sep conference on transit and livable communities, in Portland OR, Hatfield, of the Senate Appropriations Committee, went out of his way to tell a pro-transit audience how important Amtrak is, and that he endorses the half-cent gas tax money for Amtrak.

THE HORIZONLINER CARS that had been sent to Seattle (see elsewhere in this issue) are now being sent out again, replaced with Amfleet—likely to be used for the new Southern California trains, according to a late report.

THE NARP BOARD of Directors will hold its semi-annual meeting in Seattle Oct 27-28.

AMTRAK CALIFORNIA HAS been advertising a two-for-one fare promotion on the CAPITOLS, SAN JOAQUINS and SAN DIEGANS since our last issue. The promotion is good Sep 12-Nov 2 on Tue, Wed and Thur only; buy one ticket and a companion rides free. Coupons for the deal appear in print ads.

WORK IS UNDERWAY on rebuilding the Cypress freeway in West Oakland. It was destroyed in the Oct 17, 1989 earthquake, killing 42 people in cars and trucks. The freeway was closely involved in the Oakland train station and SP yards. The 16th Street station was also rendered unusable by the quake, leading to construction of the Emeryville and Jack London Square stations. The SP yards and tracks near 16th St have been radically revised as a result of the new alignment of the freeway. The old freeway was three blocks from the 16th St station. The $933 million rebuilding job is 25% done.

• • •

BART WILL OPEN its North Concord station Dec 16. The extension from Concord is less than 5mins travel time, and the fare will be 10 cents higher than a San Francisco to Concord trip. By next summer the Concord line will be extended further, to Bay Point near Pittsburg. The extension to North Concord cost about $506 million, and was on budget, though delayed several months by heavy rains last winter. BART, showing off the new station to the press Oct 5, said it has new fare machines that will accept ATM cards and credit cards. The station reportedly has a wide-open feeling, with a nice view of Mount Diablo. BART added five trains to its lines in early Oct, improving service.

The public has until Nov 20 to file comments on BART's SF Airport extension project, specifically its aerial track design. For info, call 415-398-2002.

AMTRAK WILL SPONSOR a community celebration at the San Luis Obispo CA station Oct 28 10am-5pm, marking the extension of a SAN DIEGAN to San Luis. There will be an equipment display emphasizing SAN DIEGAN and COAST STARLIGHT service. A Pacific Parlor car will be on display, plus Horizon, Amfleet and Superliner II equipment. The cars will leave L.A. Oct 27 at 10:15am, and they will also constitute train 776 on Oct 29. The Superliner equipment will be removed at L.A. as the train continues to San Diego. At 9am Oct 28 the train is scheduled to break a banner at San Luis, after which invited guests will come aboard. The public will come aboard at 10:00.

SAN DIEGAN EXPRESS service will be inaugurated with the Oct 29 timetable change. On Oct 28 and 29 inaugural runs will occur from Santa Barbara to Glendale Oct 28 and from L.A. to San Diego Oct 29. The inaugural schedule the 28th will be Santa Barbara 8:30-10am, Oxnard 11:45-12:30pm, Simi Valley 1:20-2:15pm, Burbank 3:05-3;35, and Glendale 3:50-4:50. On the 29th it will be L.A. 8:30-9:30am, Santa Ana 10:35-11:30am, Oceanside 12:30pm-1:30pm, Solana Beach 1:45-2:25, and San Diego 3-5 pm. Equipment will deadhead to Santa Barbara for this the evening of Oct 27. The equipment is expected to be California cars plus a Superliner coach-baggage. Train 771 will lv San Diego at 6:33am, arriving L.A. at 8:58 to connect to the northbound STARLIGHT, and arriving Santa Barbara at 11:36 am. Train 780 will leave Santa Barbara at 2:30pm, arriving L.A. at 4:55pm and San Diego at 7:40pm.

The San Luis Obispo train (the CENTRAL COAST?) will probably use Amfleet plus Horizon equipment. Two separate equipment sets are needed to operate both SLO trains. Tentative schedules are: train 776 lv San Luis at 7:15am, arrive L.A. 12:10pm, arrive San Diego at 3:20pm. Train 779 will leave San Diego at 12:30pm, arrive L.A. at 3:12pm and San Luis at 8:33pm. The SAN DIEGAN schedules above are also tentative.

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ONTARIO CA TRANSPORTATION officials are talking up a proposed people mover to be built by Raytheon Company, which is already working on one for Rosemont IL. The system would serve Ontario International Airport, connecting it with the convention center, hotels and the big Ontario Mills mall. There would be about 45 rail cars, carrying four peOple plus baggage each. The cost of the project might be as high as $75 million. Officials envision having groups that would benefit from the people mover form a non-profit corporation to finance it.

TWO CALIFORNIA COUNTIES, Orange and Los Angeles, both struggling with cash deficits were given funds by this year's legislature that were taken outof transportation budgets, to the tune of $620 million. In 1996, there will be a push in the state legislature to let the other 56 counties do likewise—shift transportation funds to their general funds to be used for other purposes..

THE OPENING OF San Francisco Muni's F streetcar line, reported in RTN 532, took place on Sep 1. President Will Flynn of the Market Street Railway Co., a rail advocacy group, reported on it in the group's Oct 9 newsletter: "There were some glitches and problems during the first month of F-Line service. The ridership appears to be much heavier than anticipated. MSR has asked Muni to discuss ways to increase service and to try for additional funding for the cars. Muni is also working on its plan for how to best use the historic fleet.

"On Sat., Oct 7 some changes take place in streetcar and Muni Metro operation. A new signup took effect with more operators having signed for the F-Line with past PCC or historic car experience. This should help overall service.

"Also, the subway is closing every night at about 10pm, seven days a week. The F-Line will continue to run on its normal schedule. The J-Line will be operated by PCC cars after about 9:30 or 10pm each night. Service will be from the Transbay Terminal via Market to Noe, Noe to 17th, left on 17th, right on Church to Balboa Park station. Inbound, service is regular J-Church routing to Market Street, then right on Market to Transbay Terminal. The K, L, M and N lines will operate with motor coaches each night after the subway is closed. The reason for closure is continued work on the new automatic train control system.

"On Halloween, Oct 31, the outbound F-Line cars will leave Market St at Duboce, going through the Duboce Yard, to Church St, then via Church to 30th St. This change will occur about 6pm. Inbound, cars will run from 30th/Church to Market St, then right on Market following the normal F-Line routing."

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NARP REGION XII members have organized a fund-raising excursion on the equipment set that runs L.A. to San Luis Obispo Oct 27 and on the first revenue train southbound the 29th. The package price of $100 includes a $25 donation to support NARP's information campaign. Two nights' lodging is included in a $172 package. Optional sightseeing tours are also available. For info, call Carl Schiermeyer weekdays 9-4 at 714-964-0200.

THE DISCOVERY CHANNEL cable TV channel will show a short clip of Market St Railway advocacy group's streetcar restoration work on the "Start to Finish" show on Nov 2 and Dec 18.

METROLINK WILL PLACE a new order for cars with Bombardier shortly, having cancelled its $38 million order with Morrison-Knudsen for commuter-style California cars. A shortage of cars has resulted in some standees on the 5:47am San Bernardino to L.A. train and the 4:20pm return run.

(continued on page 21)

MIDWEST REPORT

PCC cars run in tandem on the Midwest Electric Railway at the Midwest Old Threshers reunion last year., in Mount Pleasant IA. Photo by Don Scott.

AMTRAK'S INTERCITY BUSINESS Unit CEO Art McMahon and chief financial officer Rick Yaeger, headquartered in Chicago, were forced to resign Oct 4, effective Oct 15. To take over as acting head of Intercity, Bob Vander Clute (VP-Customer Services and Support in Washington) and Ron Hartman (VP-Contract Services, Washington) supporting him, will move to Chicago until permanent officers are found. NARP reported that Amtrak President Tom Downs said he will make an expedited recruitment effort to replace McMahon, and hopes to have a candidate to submit to the Amtrak board at its Dec meeting. RTN is told that Downs did not know about the DESERT WIND running without a diner west of Salt Lake City—box meals are given to first class passengers—and said that the arrangement was unacceptable. He learned about it from conversations with rail advocates. The Intercity unit has chalked up lackluster showings when compared to the other units, in particular the Western one. We reported in RTN 531 that Amtrak West exceeded the other business units in various financial and customer satisfaction measures. There has also been a great deal of dissatisfaction among rail patrons and advocates over recent decisions on handling of changes in the Chicago-East Coast trains. NARP said that it met with Amtrak officials on Oct 4 to discuss "a number of Intercity concerns, especially the Pittsburgh transfer problem for former BROADWAY LIMITED passengers." The group said that Amtrak apparently has agreed to "take a serious look" at running through cars acrosss Pennsylvania, and at ways to improve the handling of passengers and trains at Pittsburgh.

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TOUR OF OHIO was made by an RTL-2 Turbo Train that was renovated by New York State. The tour took place the first week of October. Although the train is being called a Turbo Train, it is actually a Turboliner, and not to be confused with the former United Aircraft TurboTrain. The publicity tour, which started from Albany NY Oct 1 at 9pm, took it to Cleveland, Toledo, Columbus and Cincinnati. It returned to the East Coast Oct 7. In late Oct it is scheduled to tour the CRESCENT route between Birmingham and New Orleans, and to visit Michigan in Nov. (It ran in revenue service Philadelphia-Harrisburg Oct 12 and back the next day after a display period, and is to be on display at Washington Union Station Oct 17.)

Amtrak and the FRA were also involved in the renovation of the train, and it has been run at speeds up to 125mph. Its trek into Ohio was to promote grassroots enthusiasm for high-speed train service in the state. The train was handsomely repainted in a pattern somewhat suggestive of the new AMD103 locomotives, and provided with shiny, bumper-like chrome wraparounds on the front. One of the routes covered in Ohio was between Toledo and Findlay, organized by the NW Ohio Rail Task Force and the Ohio Rail Development Commission. The 235-seat train offered free rides to interested citizens. From Columbus it ran special trips to baseball playoff games in Cleveland and Cincinnati.

PICTURED AT LEFT are two of the five Great Lakes lighthouse designs appearing on current U.S. postage stamps. Shown are (l-r) Spectacle Reef, Lake Huron and Marblehead, Lake Erie. Marblehead OH is the home of RTN contributor George Danchisen. For info on saving our lighthouses for posterity, contact the U.S. Lighthouse Society, 244 Kearny St, 5th Floor, San Francisco CA 94103-4507.

OVER 500,000 RIDERS were counted on Cleveland RTA buses and trains over Labor Day weekend, attracted by special events in the city—substantially more than normal, officials said.

SABOTAGE ACT DERAILS SUNSET LIMITED

Amtrak train 1, the westbound SUNSET LIMITED, at 1:40am on Oct 9 was derailed by the work of one or more saboteurs 27 miles east of Ryder, Arizona. The train had left Phoenix and was due into Yuma at 12:48am, apparently running somewhat late. The train crossed a bridge about two car-lengths long over a dry wash in the Arizona desert, hitting a spot where bolts had been removed from a 36-inch-long connecting bar between two sections of jointed rail, allowing the rail to move out of alignment. A wire had been placed to maintain electrical signal contact between the two rail sections so that no warning signal of a broken track was given. The train was traveling at 50mph and the two engines crossed the sabotaged area without mishap, but the first seven cars of the 12-car train derailed, with the four cars immediately behind the baggage car jacknifing off the track and falling into the 30-foot ravine. The next two cars remained upright but derailed, not falling off the rail embankment, and the last five cars did not derail.

One person, sleeping car attendant Mitchell Bates, 41, who had worked for Amtrak for 20 years, was killed when he was thrown against the side of his room. A total of 78 others were injured, a few of them seriously. The train was carrying 248 passengers and 20 crew members.

The consist of the wrecked train was engines 511 (Dash-8) and 398 (F40); cars 1208 baggage (derailed and tilted to the left off track), Hi-level transition dorm car 39925 (derailed and on side in gulley), (remaining cars all Superliner I except where noted:) sleeper 32061 (on side in gully with bad damage), sleeper 32004 (on side in gully), diner 38026 (front end resting in gully, rear end on railroad embankment), Superliner II lounge 33030 (derailed and upright on embankment, slightly jacknifed), coach 34077 (derailed and slightly jacknifed, upright on rail embankment),(remaining cars not derailed:) Hi-level coach 39956 (not derailed, but damage reported, possibly to coupler), coach-baggage 31033, (remaining cars are through cars from TEXAS EAGLE) coach 34022, coach-baggage 31019, and sleeper 32013. The last five underailed cars were pulled back to Phoenix by SP freight power with their passengers aboard.

Becasue of at least two notes found at the scene, law enforcement authorities termed the wreck an act of terrorist sabotage. The text of the typewritten note is given on page 22. The notes (all copies of the same text) were signed "Sons of the Gestapo." FBI agents, who took over the investigation, did not know of such a group, and surmised that the name might have been invented to throw investigators off the scent. They began to consider the possibility that the sabotage might have been done by a disgruntled Amtrak or SP former employee. The saboteur or saboteurs had knowledge of railroad operation. Attention also focussed on a small publication called SP Trainline, with about 1800 subscribers, 30 of them in Arizona. As it happened, the publication had been mailed from Kansas on Oct 3, and it carried an article on a famous track-sabotage wreck in Nevada on Aug 12, 1939. In that case the westbound SP's CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO derailed at 10:32pm at Harney, Nevada, between Carlin and Elko, killing 24 people and injuring over 100. No perpetrator of that act was ever apprehended. The 1939 sabotage was similar to the present one. The magazine is published by the SP Historical and Technical Society, and edited by John R. Signor, who also has written books including "Tragic Train" about the 1939 wreck.

Numerous railroad workers and railfans are familiar with track construction and would know how to perform such sabotage, regardless of a publication of a similar wreck that happened to appear shortly before the present incident. In fact, after the Oct 9 wreck, many newspapers including the NY Times published front-page diagrams showing how the sabotage was performed, thus increasing such knowledge among the general population.

The incident received nearly as wide media coverage as the Sep 22, 1993 SUNSET LIMITED accident in Alabama, though there were few references made to that event. (Locally, rail advocate Bruce Lockey found himself on TV camera at the Berkeley station and told the interviewer that the way to guard against such an act of sabotage is to use welded rail, and he put in a pitch for getting the agreement with SP going for the San Jose-Sacramento corridor improvement.)

The wreck wasn't the only disruption to the train; it has originated in New Orleans because of Hurricane Opal that caused train 2 of Oct 3 to terminate at New Orleans, and its equipment turned there to become no. 1 of Oct 6.

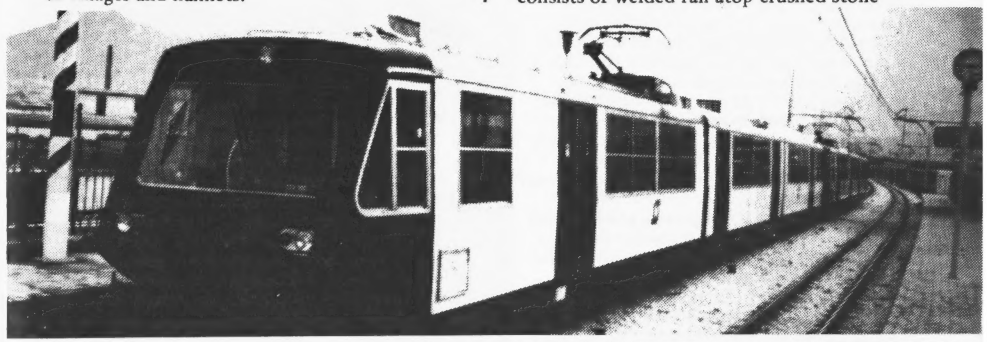
THE CIRCUMVESUVIANA RAILWAY—SON OF BART

by Bruce J. Russell

Naples, Italy, is the terminus of an intriguing electrified suburban railway called the Circumvesuviana, which serves the towns on both sides of the world-famous volcano that looks down on the city and its azure bay. Built in 1890 as a steam-powered, meter-gauge railroad, it has evolved into a peppy electrified carrier whose patronage continues to grow in spite of the area's high ownership of automobiles. From its own modern, multi-track terminal in central Naples, it stops alongside the mainline station at Plaza Garibaldi before heading into the foothills of Mt. Vesuvius. A junction a few miles outside Naples allows one branch to circle the north side of the mountain while the other continues to the south where it again divides, creating two parallel sections that follow different alignments in order to serve separate clusters of villages and hamlets.

The most popular route terminates at the seaside resort of Sorrento. Along the way it passes through Pompeii, a worldwide tourist mecca. Another line stops at Herculaneum, a smaller town destroyed by the same eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in the First Century A.D.

The Eurailpass and Inter-Rail ticket are both valid on this independent regional railroad. During the summer tourist season, extra trains must be run to handle the crowds. A recent NY Times travel article on Naples and vicinity mentioned the Circumvesuviana and gave it high marks for speed, cleanliness and punctuality. Although only about 15% of the line is double-tracked, the frequency of service far exceeds that of many North American routes which feature double iron. Meets occur with clocklike precision and timekeeping is excellent. The right of way consists of welded rail atop crushed stone



(Above:) The Circumvesuviana Railway's 1978-vintage cars strongly resemble those of California's BART.

(Right:) A Circumvesuviana train pulling into the Pompeii station.

Photos by the author, April 4, 1995.

(continued on page 23)

The Last Runs of the Houston TEXAS EAGLE

BY DAN MONAGHAN

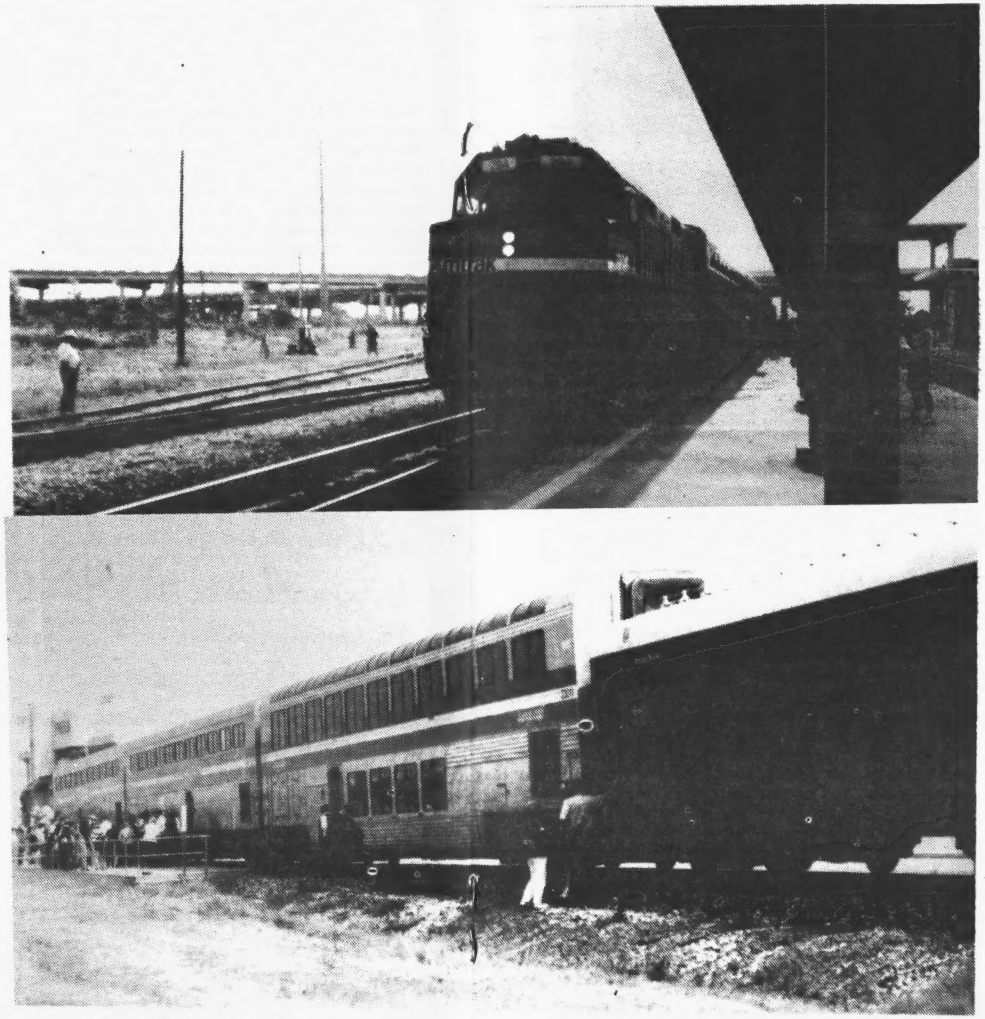
September 9 saw the last trip southbound of Dallas-Houston train 521 on a much more pleasant day than previous weeks, during which time heat and smog had become unbearable.

This last run was made more colorful by the presence of John Radovich's private car bringing up the rear and occupied by his family members and friends. John operates an automotive parts and repair center known as "John's Cars" near Fair Park in Dallas, specializing in Jaguars. His car is the former "George Brooke Roberts", built in 1949 for service on the rear of the Pennsylvania Railroad's GENERAL, operating between New York and St. Louis. It contains two drawing rooms, one compartment, one double bedroom, a dinette and a lounge section, and was formerly owned by the late John T. Brigham, carrying the "Big John" name. It is now named "John L. Radovich, Jr." in honor of the present owner's father who was a former general manager of the Galveston, Houston & Henderson Railroad, retiring in 1987. Ahead of the private car were a Superliner lounge, coach and coach-baggage. The women who were passengers aboard the private car brought delicious food and beverages, which added enjoyment to the trip.

Train 21 from Chicago was a bout a half hour late, but left ample time for the locomotive and cars for 521 to be removed and coupled to the private car for an almost-on-time departure. An unscheduled stop had been arranged at Ennis for a group of people to get off for attendance at the annual "Railroad Days" celebration at the Ennis Museum. A large crowd greeted the train, which stopped for five minutes, departing at 5:05pm. The engineer said before leaving Dallas that we would be out to have a good time and several extra stops would be made—if somebody saw a Dairy Queen and wanted to stop, let him know! He didn't care; he was going back to freight service the next week anyway.

It was interesting to note that ditches were being dug and fiber optics cable were being lade apparently the entire length of the SP between Dallas and Houston. An entire train with cable reels mounted on flat cars and other installation equipment was noted at Mexia.

Because of the Ennis stop and various slow orders, Corsicana was reached at 5:28 for a two-minute stop. There were no dispatching problems southbound, as all freights were on sidings and the Amtrak train had no interference. Three freights were met or passed before darkness made it difficult to note the contents of sidings. A dragging equipment detector somewhere between Corsicana and Hearne gave the train a red light. The train crew got out and inspected



(Top:) Train 522 pulls into Houston station from overnight storage to load for its last run to Dallas on Sep 10. (Above:) Train 522 makes its last stop at College Station TX, home of Texas A&M, now a major Texas city without Amtrak service. Photos by John Radovich.

beneath the cars, but found nothing, so it was a false indication.

The assistant conductor and one of the women serving as train attendants asked for permission to ride to the next stop just to see what the private car was like, and were welcomed aboard warmly.

College Station was reached at 8:30, where another large crowd was present to meet the train. Arrival in Houston was close to two hours late, due to more slow orders and extra stops. This made for a short night at the Medical Center Marriott returning for an on-time departure at 8:55 am with a large crowd, balloons, and considerable media coverage—much better than the oblivious media in Dallas with the minimal presence that existed looking only for crocodile tears flowing due to loss of the train and ignoring relevant facts. There are so many murders these days they don't have room for transportation coverage. The report on Monday in the Dallas Morning News was marginal journalism at best, with only establishment propaganda quoted and no investigative effort.

A few miles out of Houston the train stopped at a country road crossing, where a tiny little black woman in a bright red dress met the train and was hugged and given gifts by the train crew and balloons in remembrance of her unfailing presence at trackside to wave at the train. How many times has Southwest Airlines ever done that?!

Another of the female train attendants wanted to see if she could throw a switch at one siding. Being a young girl and not exactly a heavyweight, she did not have quite enough power to pull the handle around, but with her pulling the handle and the assistant conductor pulling on her, they managed to swing it.

While the dispatcher on duty for the southbound run had his head on straight, the one on Sunday for the northbound run must have been off the extra bord. No. 522 was consistently sidetracked for freights including a coal train. At one location near Mexia he set up a meet for four trains on one siding. We were put in the hole behind a northbound freight where there was a lengthy wait for container trains operating in two sections southbound. Following their passage, the Amtrak train was allowed to proceed ahead of the northbound freight also on the siding. It wasn't long before we wound up behind another freight, and we dragged into Dallas close to 6pm, where no. 22 was waiting.

Several good contacts were made, and all advocacy groups along the line are supporting our proposal that service on the line be restored with departure from Fort Worth and Dallas with a through car connection in Houston to the SUNSET LIMITED for service to New Orleans and Florida.

Observing track conditions between Dallas and Houston, it was evident that major improvements are being made all over the line. Ties are being changed out and track reballasted. It all rode very smoothly, even in the rear car and in areas where slow orders exist. When improvements are complete, they should permit a reasonable schedule for Amtrak if they will simply given them treatment equal to their own container trains. Nobody expects the old SUNBEAM schedule of four hours, 25 minutes achieved in the 1930s to reappear.

Much discussion on the trip centered around the "Downs Syndrome" which is the term associated with the debilitating affliction that is decimating Amtrak's high-revenue long-haul trains in order to pay for high-speed tilt trains in the Boston-Washington Corridor. Opinions ranged from simply lack of experience and knowledge concerning the system

(Above:) Guests of John Radovich enjoy the trip to Houston on the last run of train 521 on his private car named for his father, John L. Radovich, Jr., a retired railroad executive. (Below:) The last run of train 521 on Sep 9 stops at Ennis for an unscheduled stop to detrain passengers for the annual Railroad Days celebration. Photos by John Radovich.

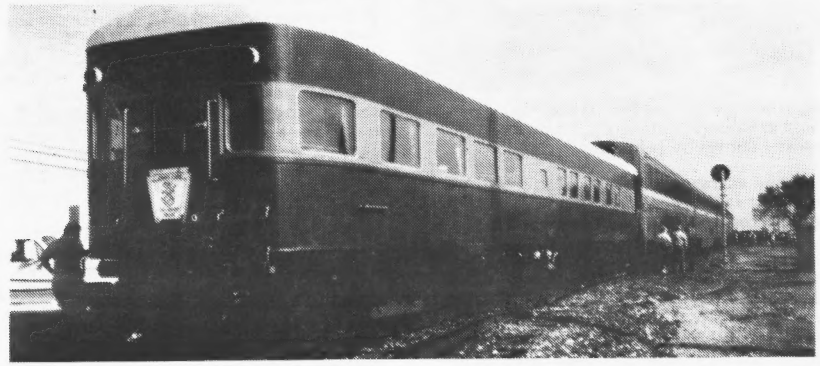
to a deliberate goal of completely eliminating the national system. If Amtrak is sincere about locating routes based upon sound business decisions, they cannot ignore the Fort Worth/Dallas-Miami proposal which conforms to one of the most heavily-traveled corridors in the Southwest.

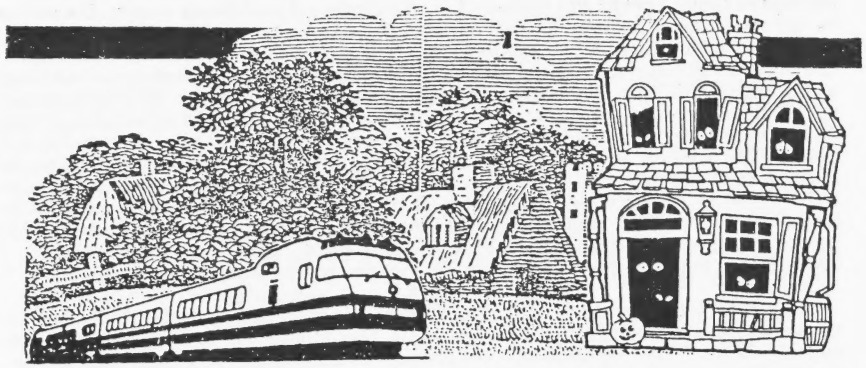
All Amtrak supporters are waiting for the slightest indication that there is a desire to rebuild on a sounder basis in the national system. The restoration of the CARDINAL is perhaps such an indication; however, there is little doubt that this was done at the "suggestion" of Senator Byrd. So far no other indications have appeared. Approval of the Fort Worth/Dallas-Miami route would be such an indication and one that could be done at low cost. As more time passes before such a development appears, the more opinions will shift toward the obliteration theory, and when such an eventuality finally comes to pass, there will be widespread approval of a zero budget for Amtrak, leaving all rail passenger funding to the states.

Amtrak supporters in Dallas did not oppose the discontinuance of 521 and 522 because the trains did not fit a well-defined market. If Amtrak had done any research in 1988 they would have seen that two of their own previous attempts and one of the Santa Fe's to provide Houston-Chicago service via Dallas and/or Fort Worth did not provide significant ridership, since the route is too circuitous. A more likely success would be a direct route on the MoPac via Palestine and Longview, where they have substituted a bus for the present. Future efforts should conform to the well-established Southwestern corridors from Dallas to Denver, Chicago, Los Angeles, Atlanta and New Orleans/Florida. There is no need to study these opportunities. The evidence is there to support them.

Texas sends $30 billion to the federal government in income taxes each year, the third largest behind California and New York, and far more than other 403b states. Why should they be asked to pay additional money under 403b when their proportion of Amtrak service falls far short of the state's basic investment in the federal government, and service in Texas is all interstate in character?

These questions and many more were talked about on the last runs of 521 and 522, combining the discussion of serious subjects with an enjoyable trip as participants looked more toward the future of Amtrak service than mourning over a discontinued train.





MIXED TRAIN OF THOUGHTS

UNION PACIFIC'S EXECUTIVE train of restored streamliner equipment made a promotional round trip on behalf of regional rail service studies on Colorado's Front Range corridor on Oct 12. The trainset, which also included the C&NW's full-length dome car and theater-seating observation car, traveled the Greeley-Brighton-Denver line also used by the Amtrak PIONEER.

VIPs and rail advocates from the region were invited along, and the trip brightened the front pages of both Denver dailies with Armour Yellow. Reaction to the trip was favorable in most reports, with a considerable amount of educational work being done among the media participants.

Part of the route in Denver is shared by the proposed Air Train service between Denver International Airport and Union Station. A private-public partnership is exploring financing alternatives for the trains-to-the-planes concept.

On the previous day, more routine operations saw both trains 25 and 26 being delayed by UP dispatching snafus on the same line. Northbound (timetable westbound) train 25 from Denver left two minutes late but arrived in Borie 84 minutes late. Train 26 from Borie departed 89 minutes late, after sitting just west of the Borie station for much of that time, according to passengers who were on board. Passengers from the Cheyenne bus connection waited 50 minutes at the Borie facility for the train to arrive on the double-track main line. They had previously been held an extra 45 minutes in the Cheyenne Amtrak waiting room, because the driver of the connecting bus routinely checks for delays in trains before departing the Wyoming capital.

In spite of 75 minutes of padding between Greeley and Denver, train 26 arrived 90 minutes late in the Mile High City. The frustrated train chief, having previously "sold" passengers on the numerous enjoyable activities available during the Denver layover, reported the mounting delays as being "compliments of the Union Pacific dispatchers."

Passengers waiting for delayed trains in Denver's station will be enjoying another amenity. Flat Pennies, a new cafe/bar, has opened in the old station restaurant location. The restaurant was closed in 1986 when the building's railway owners refused to sign a long-term lease with the former restaurant operators, expecting imminent redevelopment of the site.....

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DENVER'S CENTRAL Light Rail Transit line celebrated its first birthday on Oct 6 with cake for patrons at selected stations. One of the anti-rail board members, Jon Caldera of Boulder, demanded that the promotion be conducted on a profit-making basis, but the distribution of cake was free. The Regional Transportation District continues to expand Park-n-Ride lots on the line, as all are jammed beyond their legal capacities.....

THE IDEA OF building a railroad tunnel Alaska and Russia, under the Bering Strait, has come to the surface again. The mining engineer who thought up the idea in 1986 and got a group incorporated in 1991 to build such a railroad—George Koumal—told NY Times reporters in September that he predicts the tunnel will become a reality in his lifetime. He is now 53—"And I smoke", he said, suggesting the construction will be done sooner than we would predict. He said the project would cost about $40 billion. It would involved 52 miles of tunnel under the seabed, with a total length of 60-80 miles, making it the longest tunnel in the world. The point of the project is to open up areas of Alaska and Siberia to coal, mineral and oil development. Freight hauling would be the main function of the line, but of course passengers could use it too if demand developed.....

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS as of Sep 10 is on its new routing, and timetable readers note that there are now 124 nonstop miles between Memphis TN and Greenwood MS, covered in 125mins.....

SUPERLINER II COACHES no longer have the single seat that the original Superliner coaches possessed, according to rail watchers who have examined the cars.....

STATE OF ILLINOIS reportedly is buying Heritage Fleet cars from Amtrak.....

COLORADO COUNTIES ARE worried that a merged SP/UP will abandon the rail line between Pueblo and Dotsero CO, the famous Royal Gorge route. Locations on the route include Minturn, the Tennessee Pass Tunnel, Leadville, Buena Vista, Salida and Canon City. Colorado newspapers reported that four central-state counties plan to fight any such abandonment. If the line were abandoned, it would leave a 173-mile swath from Canon City to Dotsero without rail service. This would hurt the economic viability of the area, local officials say, and it would upset plans talked about for ski-area employees to use rail to commute between Lake and Eagle Counties and for travelers at Eagle County Regional Airport to reach resorts by rail. Such railroad towns as Salida and Minturn would be "transformed" if their rail yards had to be removed. There would be the loss of employment in the area, and truck traffic would increase to serve mining and other industries. The Royal Gorge route was used by the former Rio Grande domeliner ROYAL GORGE, discontinued in Dec 1966. The affected counties plan a Nov 6 public meeting on the topic.....

★★★

THE ISSUE OF requiring the state of Texas to contribute 403b funds to Amtrak to avoid losing its service is answered, says Dr. Dan Monaghan, by the following two considerations: (1) Most 403b services provide direct benefits to in-state enterprises such as the recreational facilities in Vermont. No route in Texas is analogous to this. All are integral parts of Amtrak's interstate trains. There is virtually no opportunity to operate corridor service in Texas due to the configuration of the railroads.

(2) Since Amtrak receives the vast majority of its funding from federal appropriations, considerable significance should be placed upon the income tax contribution of a given state when evaluating service , rather than 403b contributions, since this is the principal sustenance of Amtrak. Texas ranks considerably higher in income tax contributions than any of the major 403b contributing states except California and New York, and should be serviced accordingly.

The total tax contribution of the major 403b states plus Texas, according to 1991 IRS statistics, goes as follows: CA $61,650 (all figures in millions), NY $40,339, TX $30,739, IL $25,118, PA $22,062, MO $8.473, WI $8,355, and VT $903.....

★★★

LONDON-PARIS TRAFFIC on European airlines has dropped 16% in the first six months of 1995 due to competition from the Channel Tunnel. The Tunnel itself is in "dire" financial straits, according to reports, having taken in in the first half of 1995 only a little more than half of its projected revenue: for the full year it will be about $435 million. Early October reports said that Eurotunnel had stopped interest payments on its debt; the payments are over $3 million per day. It is to come up with a reorganization plan within six months. Eurotunnel said that patronage was lower than expected, and that there is a heavy price competition with the ferry companies.....

FRIDAY-THE-THIRTEENTH report from Glenwood Springs, Colorado: There was a fierce lightning storm yesterday afternoon. One man was hospitalized when he was hit by lightning near I-70 in Glenwood Canyon. There are fires in West Glenwood. One lightning bolt struck just above the Amtrak station, and the depot building shook. The trains were quite late: CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR train 5 was 2hrs, 24mins late; it had left Denver on time. (Private cars "Golden Moon" and "Imperial Leaf" were on it.) Train 6 was 3hrs, 8mins late. (It carried private cars "Tallahassee" and "City of Angels", the latter marked "Uncommon Journeys—Century Rail.) One passenger waiting for the westbound train was about at the boiling point by the time it arrived. He would not be a happy camper on board.....

SYNDICATED COLUMNIST George Will of The Washington Post in early October wrote about the push to privatize Amtrak. While he seemed to be seeking a balanced argument, he was clearly on the side of those who love money more than trains—or more than anything else in the world, for that matter. He said that recently a full-page magazine ad by Amtrak was labeled "No federal funds were used to pay for this message." His comment: "What mendacity. Money is fungible, so taxpayers paid for as large a portion of the cost of that ad as they pay of the overall costs of Amtrak—about 20%." He did go on to say that there is a "lot" of truth in the statement that government even more heavily subsidizes air and road passengers. But he insists the government must get out of railroading if the government is to be rationalized. So why not get it out of air and highways too?.....

THE BURLINGTON NORTHERN Santa Fe Corporation on Sep 26 said that it will not oppose the UP's proposed acquisition of SP, and the involved railroads came to an agreement on trackage rights and line sales for the following regions:

West Coast-Intermountain: BNSF will operate over SP and UP lines between Denver and Oakland. BNSF will serve Provo, Geneva, Salt Lake City and Ogden UT and Reno NV and other intermediate points, operating over UP's Feather River route and SP's Donner Pass line. BNSF will purchase UP's Inside Gateway route in Northern California, between Keddie and Bieber, linking BNSF's Pacific Northwest lines with California. BNSF will service the San Francisco Bay Area via UP trackage rights. BNSF will operate over UP and SP between Riverside and Ontario CA, with access to various Southern California industries. BNSF will gain access to the Port of Oakland over SP. UP/SP will have trackage rights in Oregon over BNSF to connect Eastern Oregon with the SP's I-5 corridor linking the Pacific Coast, and overhead trackage rights over BNSF's Mojave-Barstow CA line. BNSF will enter into a proportional rate agreement with UP/SP over the Portland Gateway which will allow UP/SP to compete with BNSF for business in an area extending from Montana west and from Canada to the Columbia River and to an area extending from Oregon to West Texas.

Texas-Louisiana: BNSF will operate over UP between Houston and Brownsville TX, serving the Texas Gulf Coast and access to Mexico at Brownsville and Laredo through the Tex-Mex. BNSF will gain a through route to New Orleans by trackage rights on SP's line between Houston and Iowa Junction LA, near Lake Charles. The remaining SP line east to Avondale LA, near New Orleans, from Iowa Jct, including terminal facilities, will be sold to BNSF, with UP retaining trackage rights. BNSF will gain access to petrochemical plants at Mont Belview, Baytown, Amelia and Orange TX. BNSF will operate over UP and SP to San Antonio and Eagle Pass. BNSF will operate over various UP and SP routes in Texas, including Taylor to Round Rock, Waco-Taylor-Smithville, and El Paso-Sierra Blanca. UP will sell its line between Dallas and Waxahachie to BNSF, but will retain exclusive rights to serve customers on that line.

Houston-Memphis: BNSF will operate over SP between Houston and Fair Oaks AR, and over UP between Fair Oaks and Memphis TN, and will gain access to Arkansas paper mills.

In all, BNSF will gain rights to over 3500 miles of track, and UP and SP will sell BNSF over 335 miles of track for $150 million. This will give BNSF access to a significant number of new shippers and will provide stronger rail competition for the Gulf Coast petrochemical belt, U.S.-Mexico border points, the Intermountain West, California and the Pacific Northwest. It will bring a new Class I railroad to both Utah and Nevada.....

★★★

SIX ICE TRAINS, second generation versions, have been ordered from Siemens by the Dutch railways. They will be used between Amsterdam and Frankfurt or Berlin. The newer version is faster than the original. This is the first order Siemens has received for ICE trains outside Germany. Siemens is one of the bidders on the coming Amtrak high-speed train proposal.....

FRENCH PUBLIC WORKERS staged a one-day general strike on Oct 10. This shut down all public transportation. Foreign tourists had to find taxis to reach airports and there they found service slow, typically with a 2-hour wait aboard planes before takeoff. However, the planes were operating.....

THE QUOTE GIVEN on page 5 from the NY Times of Oct 8 was from a Week In Review article that summed up the political situation to date on the move to secure a half-cent of the current gasoline tax for Amtrak. The article was accompanied by a splendid photo by a Times photographer of a southbound COAST STARLIGHT on the horseshoe curve of the Cuesta Grade near San Luis Obispo, taken from a vestibule door. Visible are two AMD103 locomotives, baggage car and eight passenger cars, the last being a Pacific Parlor car, which indicates the photographer was in one of the sleepers.....

THE FEDERAL DOT on Oct 2 announced that it will begin accepting nominations for this year's Secretarial Award for Excellence in Transportation Research and Development. Written nominations must be received by Nov 30. For info, call Kevin Green at (617) 494-2106.....

LATE NEWS FLASH: The COAST STARLIGHT will operate five days a week during the period mid-Jan through mid-Mar. There was no immediate information on which days of the week it will operate. Apparently Amtrak had not decided on the exact schedule yet. Also, it was not known whether the reduced operation would apply only north of Oakland or to the entire STARLIGHT route.....

★★★

CONGRESS WORKED ONLY four days in the first half of October, and then took Oct 16 off due to the "Million Man March" on Washington. This, or course, gave rail advocates more time to contact their legislators on behalf of pending Amtrak legislation. But, NARP reported, chairman Bud Shuster of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee stayed in Washington during the first week's recess and individually lobbied Senators who are members of the conference committee on the National Highway System bill, trying to kill the Senate's Roth-Biden amendment, which would give states flexibility to spend ISTEA money for intercity passenger trains. NARP said that the Senate conferees appeared to be strongly on the side of flexibility, but several were wavering. NARP also reported that chairman Bill Archer of the House Ways and Means Committee wrote a letter opposing the flexibility amendment and claiming jurisdiction over the matter.....

SINCE THE FEDERAL budget for fiscal 1995-6 has not been approved, the government is operating under a continuing resolution that took effect Oct 1. This funds federal programs at 5% less than the average of the pending House and Senate levels. So for Amtrak until the final budget is passed, it means the rail corporation is funded at the leve of $226 million per year, or 42% less than it was receiving before Oct 1. This is why Amtrak is looking for further economies, such as reducing STARLIGHT operation, and of course it doesn't know what its final funding level will be. The Amtrak reauthorization bills in both the House and Senate (HR 1788 and S 1318) are likely being voted on as we go to press. Said NARP, "The Senate bill will be considered without the half-cent trust fund for Amtrak. That must be approved by the Finance Committee as part of a tax bill—preferably the budget reconciliation measure [which also will probably be voted upon while we are in press] ... However, we have heard that chairman Roth of the Finance Committee will not include the Amtrak half-cent in his recommendations for the budget package. Nevertheless, we understand he remains supportive, and we urge you to contact your Senators in support of the Amtrak half-cent".....

THE TRANSIT INDUSTRY is lobbying against the half-cent for Amtrak, and of course the highway lobby is strongly opposed to it. But NARP explains that "giving the half-cent to Amtrak would have a tiny impact on transit spending. Even if one assumes that Amtrak spends the entire half-cent and transit funding continues steady, the surplus in the mass transit account of the Highway Trust Fund would still be more than $8 billion in 2000".....

★★★

THE SENATE HAS some sympathy for the unfairness of loading Amtrak and buses with a 4.3-cent fuel tax which the airlines don't have to pay, reports NARP. Some key committees in both the House and Senate have included a two-year airline exemption on the tax (their exemption expired this year), but the Treasury Department began collecting the tax from the airlines Oct 1 pending a settlement of this issue.....

BAGGAGE SERVICE BEGAN on the THREE RIVERS train about Oct 1, so the bad transfer passengers must make in Pittsburgh is made a little less bad. Also NARP said that apparently the PENNSYLVANIAN has offered checked baggage service for some time, but the timetable has never indicated it.....

HURRICANE OPAL DISRUPTED Amtrak service between New Orleans and Jacksonville and between New Orleans and Birmingham in the first days of October.....

NEW YORK TIMES ran an excellent editorial Sep 16 that argued in favor of the half-cent trust fund money for Amtrak in the Senate's Amtrak reauthorization bill. On Sep 23 the paper published three letters responding to the editorial. The lead one, from a "transportation engineer" (read "highway engineer") opposed the Times stance. "Americans abandoned passenger rail in the 1950s in favor of the flexibility and convenience of persona transportation provided by the automobile. If time or distance is a factor, one drives to the airport." The engineer, William Vandersteel of Alpine NJ, must be living back in the 1950s. The other two letters favored the Amtrak half-cent—from Ted Schulte of Lake Forest IL and Bette Dewing (director of Safe Traveling First) of NYC. On Sep 30 the Times publihsed two more letters responding to the Sep 23 letters—one from no less than William D. Fay, President of the Highway Users Federation. The second letter was favorable to trains. Writer Dana R. Klainberg of Long Island said that if everyone must have his own car to get around it would be more of a limitation on personal freedom than any train schedule could ever be.....

RAIL CANADA (continued from page 6)

Algoma Central station had been replaced by a modern structure, and the railway's lands had been turned into a vast shopping mall. Our room was at the Quality Inn, conveniently located across the street from the station, but expensive and claustrophobic: our single small window had a fine view of the kitchen ventilator system.

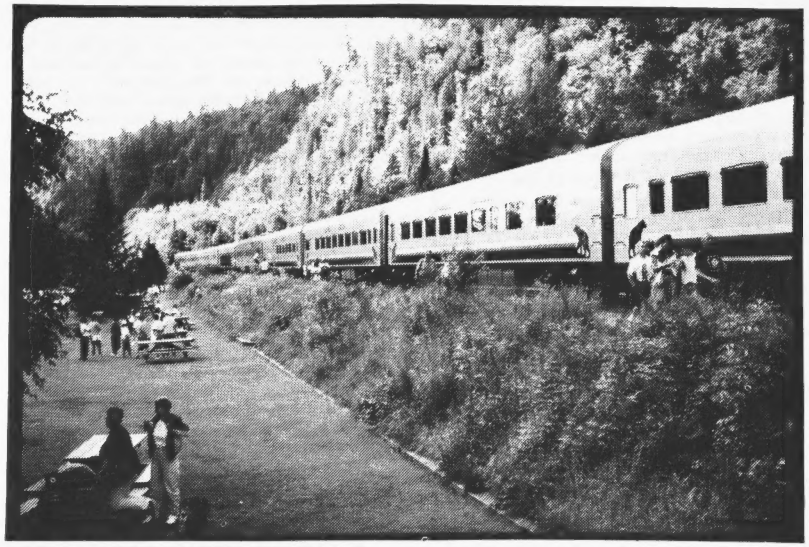
A visit to the station to pick up our tickets gained the information that the train departed at 8:00am, but it would be ready for boarding (and diner open) at 7:00am. And so it was the next morning, promptly at 7:00am, when two units in Algoma Central yellow, maroon and silver but with "Wisconsin Central" on their noses, backed the 13 cars on train 3 into the station—11 coaches and two (yes, two) dining cars. True to their word, boarding started as soon as the train stopped and the diners had a large sign "Now Open."

We took our seats in coach D, ex-CN, ex-VIA, whose interior was unchanged from its days in the Montreal-Windsor corridor, but whose exterior was in Algoma Central colors. Immediately we headed toward the diner. The nearest one was an ex-CP car, handsomely refurbished on the interior. Food service is catered by a Sault Ste. Marie concern, and the menu was extensive and the food good, as good as or better than on the CANADIAN. Eight different full breakfasts were available at prices from C$4.15 to C$6.25, with beverages and the high Canadian taxes extra, so our total bill was actually around C$15. But the food was promptly and nicely served. I chose the buttermilk pancakes with back bacon.

As we ate, a steady stream of passengers boarded the train and entered the diners. When they were full, passengers were called by car number. But there never was much waiting. We were finished before departure time, as was common in pre-Amtrak trains when diners were regularly open at boarding time. By this time 595 passengers had loaded and departure was on time at 8:00am.

On each coach seat was a brochure about the line, more a Sault Ste. Marie chamber of commerce document than informative. I was glad I had brought along the old Bill Coo guide. Each coach had an attendant, all of whom were young women dressed in strange maroon versions of Hollywood-style engineers' outfits. The single conductor was dressed in a pullover shirt (with Algoma Central Conductor knitted over the pocket) and light pants.

Upon departure, the PA system was active, and I was afraid of a day subjected to the oral excesses for which Amtrak is notorious, but after a few preliminary announcements, use of the PA was restrained. It was noted that vestibule riding was forbidden and people who did so were at their own risk—a nice compromise between passengers' needs and legal requirements. After the announcement no one ever tried to interfere with the numerous vestibule riders, and Dutch door tops remained open all day.



The detraining location at Agawa Canyon, showing picnic tables. Photo by the author.

We pulled around the curve west of the station and headed north on the Soo Subdivision, very slowly at first, past Algoma Steel Corporation, the railroad's major customer. Maximum subdivision speed limit is 50mph, but slower speeds were common all day. Climbing was steady as we turned inland away from Lake Superior. The view from the large, spotless picture windows was pleasant, as farmlands gave way to the lakes and hills of the Canadian Shield. We twisted and turned in the roadless countryside. The major scenic point on this portion of the line is the long viaduct across the Montreal River (familiar in publicity photographs), followed by Montreal Hill, the high point of the entire Algoma Central system. Lake Superior appeared to the west, far below, and then it was a steep 1.4% drop into the Agawa Canyon, our destination. Arrival at Canyon was six minutes late at 11:36am.

As is well known, in the last century the railroads of North America created business by developing tourist areas. The role of the railroads in sites such as the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, Galcier and Banff is familiar. But in most of these cases the decline of railroad passenger service has meant that railroad operation of these resorts has passed into other hands. At Agawa Canyon, however, although exceedingly modest, is perhaps the only surviving North American example of a resort park operated by a railroad and only accessible by that railroad's passenger trains. Although the park lies only a dozen miles from the Trans-Canada Highway, no road has ever been built. The Agawa River created a canyon several hundred feet deep and as little as 50 feet wide. When the Algoma Central was built, in the years before the First World War, the railroad developed a two-mile stretch of the canyon as a resort area, originally with a lodge, but today simply as a day use area with hiking trails.

As no. 3 pulled into the canyon, it was announced that box lunches were available for picnicking, or the diners would remain open throughout the two-hour stop. Agawa Canyon park rangers, in khaki uniforms, lined the track as the train pulled to a stop. These young men and women live in the canyon for the summer season.

Many passengers brought their own lunches, and headed immediately for picnic tables. We opted to walk the trails, of which there are perhaps 2-3 miles, visiting waterfalls and overlooks. What was most noticeable was the dead silence: even the faint rumbling of the engines was unheard a short distance away. It was a major contrast to an automobile-accessible tourist site, where the constant slamming of car doors and the accelerating of motors is part of the experience.

There is not much to do at Agawa Canyon: it is pretty and pleasant, but one can walk all the trails in little more than an hour. Rangers were available at all viewpoints to answer questions, but there was a surprising lack of interpretive information beyond a map: here again Bill Coo was invaluable.

There is a small gift shop and a few historic structures. By just before 1pm we had done it all, and headed back to the diner for lunch. The engines had been pulled around the train within a few minutes of our arrival and all seats had been turned. Only one diner was open, the forward CP car, but I took the opportunity to look in the rear car, an ex-Santa Fe lunch counter of the type that used to run on the CHICAGOAN and (in its last years) the GRAND CANYON. Although the Indian art was long gone, the car had been carefully refurbished, even with an attempt to duplicate as closely as possible the Fred Harvey upholstery. (As is true everywhere in the world outside of the U.S., chairs in the dining car are not considered a danger to passengers and there are none of the noxious bench seats Amtrak is forced to use.)

The lunch menu consisted of nearly a dozen items, from soup and sandwich to a roast beef dinner for $8.95. We chose the "homemade French Canadian meat pie, lightly spiced ground beef baked inside a flaky pie crust" for $7.65. Strangely, water was not available in the diner unless purchased. Again with beverages and taxes the bill was over C$20.

As we finished lunch, passengers drifted back onto the train, but it was announced that a late-running train 1 would delay our departure slightly. It was due at 1:25pm and we were to leave at 1:30pm, but no. 1 did not arrive until 1:44pm, carrying four cars, including two of the heavyweight ex-CP cars that were ACR's mainstay before the recent availability of much VIA equipment, and we began moving immediately.

It was a more subdued group that returned to Sault Ste. Marie. Despite the nearly 600 passengers, to its credit Alboma Central had provided plenty of space (technically they could have run the train with one less coach), and passengers spread out and relaxed. Some hurried running made up a little of the time, and final arrival at Sault Ste. Marie was at 5:07pm, seven minutes late.

The end to our Algoma Central day was after a dinner in the station mall while returning to our hotel room and watching no. 2 arrive from Hearst, 23 minutes late at 6:13 pm. Nearly 100 people detrained from its four cars. We had seen the entire Algoma Central passenger service in the day, all four trains.

CONSISTS: ACR no. 1, Canyon, Aug 2: engine 1753; baggage 302 & 305, coaches 5495 & 3228.

ACR no. 2, Sault Ste. Marie, Aug 2: engine 1751; baggage 309 & 301, coaches 3239 & 5571.

ACR no. 3, Sault Ste. Marie, Aug 2: engines 1502 & 2001; coaches 5442, 3210, 5519, 5512, 9302 & 3243, diners 505 & 504, coaches 3236, 5468, 5494, 5514 & 5545.

ACR no. 4, Canyon, Aug 2: same as train 3, in reverse direction, with engines run around (2001 in lead).

WEST COAST REPORT (continued from page 8)

SOME HORIZONLINER CARS, apparently shifted off the CAPITOLS and SAN JOAQUINS with the coming of the California cars, have been moved to Seattle for use there. As of Sep 29 the following Horizons were in Seattle: coaches 54009, 54048, 54062, 54065, 54068 and 54069; coach 54509, and food service cars 53504 and 53509.

TRAC'S Michael Bennett Cline, writing in the Oct-Nov issue of the rail advocates' newspaper, pointed out a number of cases where Caltrans has failed to produce regarding its Rail Program. Looking at predictions made by a Caltrans spokesman in Nov 1991, very few of them proved to have occurred. Said Cline, "There has been a notable cessation of predictions and public planning by the Rail Program since 1991. In fact, many friends of rail service have concluded that Caltrans' most serious shortcoming is its chronic failure to communicate. There is widespread public sentiment in favor of improving and extending rail service, but the Rail Program insists on keeping its plans and ideas secret, even from its natural supporters.

"The secrecy makes it impossible for rail supporters to aid in convincing legislators or commissioners to back Rail Program initiatives. A second problem with secrecy is that flawed concepts go ahead without critique or correction, resulting in fiascos like the California Car. Whatever direction the program takes, a bit more candor would go a long way towards resotring public trust in the rail program."

AMTRAK WEST CEO Gil Mallery is advocating to keep COAST STARLIGHT service daily, TRAC reports, but the train could go to less than daily service north of Oakland at slack periods, if Amtrak funding is low.

RAIL FANTRIPS

Dec 15-17: Chicago Shoppers' Special. TWILIGHT LTD from Mich. points to Chicago late on 12/15, overnite Palmer House, CTA rails, tours, shopping, banquet, 12/17 bus tour Chicago, museum, ret. LAKE CITIES. $325 up. Bluewater NRHS, Box 296, Royal Oak MI 48068.

Jan 20, 1996: Snowflake Special—winter fun train, charter Atk train Boston-Berkshires, over 400mis RT. Choice of sleigh rides or mountain railroading to Albany NY. $65 incl lunch. Mystic Valley Railway Society Inc, PO Box 486, Hyde Park MA 02136-0486. 617-361-4445.

Feb 11, 1996: RAIL-A-RAMA XXI at Demetri's Conv. Center, Rte 1 (Rte 95 ext 9) 10am-4pm. $3, kids $1. Railroad hobby show. Mystic Valley Railway Society Inc, PO Box 486, Hyde Park MA 02136-0486. Phone 617-361-4445.

Send large SASE to addresses. One listing in RTN is free. It must give specific dates of operation. RAIL TRAVEL NEWS, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. Next issue is our monthly Excursion of the Month listing, which appears in alternate issues.

BOOKS

The newly-published book "California by Train, Bus & Ferry" is the only travel guide that provides information on how to reach California's popular destinations by public transportation.

The book, edited by Kirk D. Schneider, contains 224 pages, with 16 pages of color maps and the detailed local transit information contained in the three previous editions of the same publisher's California Transit Guide.

This RTN-size, paperbound book contains an incredible amount of information. For example, checking out Berkeley in the Bay Area Transit Centers section, we are told that The Amtrak station is an unstaffed passenger shelter located at the China Station Restaurant, 3rd & University Ave. The CAPITOL and the SAN JOAQUIN lines serve it. To reach it from Berkeley BART, use AC Transit lines 9, 51 or 65, and trip time is 10 mins. AC Z line also serves it. Looking that up in the AC Transit section, we find that it runs San Francisco-Emeryville-West Berkeley-Albany every 10 mins at peak hours only. There is also about a page on Berkeley points of interest. (It even mentions the University of California Botanical Garden, which folks here would like to keep a secret.) All the information seems up to date. For example, the Emeryville and Jack London Square stations are accurately described.

We were very impressed with the amount and quality of information given that's useful to travelers for any given location in the state. Wisely, the book does not try to give transit fares, for these change frequently. It does give phone numbers for each carrier, plus other information. Our only problem with the book was catching onto its organization. That could be improved in later editions; it's not obvious to the person opening the book for the first time. But once you've caught on, you have a goldmine of information to dig.

We've arranged with the publisher to make the book available through RTN (see coupon elsewhere in this issue). The price of the book is $18.95, tax and shipping included.

CARS & CONSISTS

*PIONEER, train 26, Tacoma WA Sep 25: engine 276 (F40); cars 1447 MHC, Superliner coach-baggage 31018, Superliner II coach 34106, Superliner II diner 38041, Superliner sleepers 32028 & 32063 (used as dorm).

*YANKEE CLIPPER, train 173, New Haven Oct 3: engines two F40s numbers unknown off at New Haven, AEM7 918 on at New Haven; cars 21040, 21193 & 21032 coaches, cafe 20046, coaches 21084, 21204 & 21260, Custom Class 44932, dinette/club 48157. Train left only 5mins late, as the last Dattco bus (from busing between New Haven & Springfield) arrived at departure time.

*DESERT WIND, train 35, Glenwood Springs CO Oct 3: engines 512 & 536 (Dash-8s); cars 1515 & 1178 baggage, Superliner II dorm-sleeper 39004, Superliners 34101 coach, 38036 diner, 33016 lounge, 34038 coach, 31012 coach-baggage, sleepers 32024 & 32052. Train left 54mins late. 34101 is a Superliner II.

*SOUTHWEST CHIEF, train 3, Chicago Oct 1: engines 834, 832 & 824 (AMD103s); cars 1560, 1536, 1423, 1568, 1514, 1519 & 1444 MHCs, 1232 baggage, Hi-level coach-dorm 39916, Superliners 34052 & 34078 coaches, 33023 lounge, 38005 diner, 32018 & 32023 slprs. Same, train 4: engines 814 (AMD103), 516 (Dash-8) & 821 (AMD103); cars 1004 baggage, Superliner II transition sleeper-dorm 39003, Superliners 34029 & 34062 coaches, Superliner II lounge 33026, Superliners 38010 diner, 32006 & 32068 sleepers, 33019 lounge, 1167 & 1250 baggage, 1401, 1469, 1470 & 1473 MHCs. Train arrived 40mins early.

*EMPIRE BUILDER, train 8, Chicago Oct 1: engines 243 & 307 (F40s); cars 1170 baggage, Hi-level coach-dorm 39903, Superliners 32051 & 32001 sleepers, 34081 coach, 38008 diner, Superliner II 33032 lounge, Superliners 31022 coach-baggage & 34093 coach, Superliner II sleeper 32092 "Mississippi", 1566, 1533, 1548 & 1565 MHCs. Train arrived on time! Same, train 807 (Chicago-Minneapolis only): engine 377; Hi-level coach 39942, Superliners 31009 coach-baggage, 34046 coach, 33014 lounge, MHCs 1550, 1543 & 1553.

*TEXAS EAGLE, train 21, Chicago Oct 1: engines 375, 331 & 334 (F40s); cars 1133 & 1173 baggage, Hi-level coach-dorm 39919, Superliners 32013 & 32049 sleepers, 31000 coach-baggage, 34072 coach, Superliner II diner 38057, Superliners 33011 lounge, 34022, Hi-level coach 39952.

*Hiawatha Service trains, Chicago Oct 1: train 335: engine 198 (GP40TC); cars 54008, 54511 & 54557 coaches, engine 301 (F40). Train 337: engine 344 (F40); cars 54032 & 54512 coaches, cab control coach 9652. Train 339: engine 195 (GP40TC); cars 54522, 54101 & 54007 coaches, engine 413 (F40).

*LAKE SHORE LIMITED, train 48, Chicago Oct 1: engines 206 & 212 (F40s); cars 1160 baggage, 2980 "Pine Creek" sleeper, coaches 25052, 25058 & 25016, lounge 28012, diner 8509, coaches 25019, 25054 & 25006, Slumbercoach 2092 "Loch Arkaig", sleeper 2432 "Pacific Waves", baggage-dorm 1626, diner deadhead to NY 8519, 1401 MHC, 1250 & 1167 baggage for mail, 1440 & 1463 MHCs. Train held 20mins east of Hammond/Whiting because Conrail tracks blocked by hoses from firemen dousing a brush fire along the tracks.

TEXT OF THE SUNSET SABOTEUR NOTE

The following is the exact text of the note left at the SUNSET LIMITED wreck scene:

Indictment of the ATF and FBI

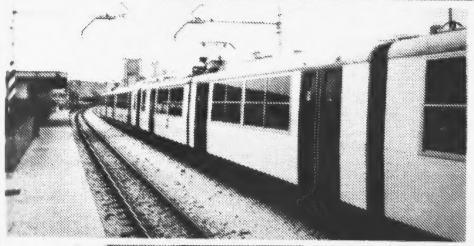
Before dawn the women awoke to say their morning prayers. They lit their kerosene lamps because the electricity had been turned off by the FBI. After observing lights in all the upstairs windows, the FBI ordered the teargas bombardment. Afterwards, only two upstairs windows were lit. The location of each was recorded. Over the next few hours ventilation holes were poked in the walls. These holes made the fire burn very much faster. Otherwise the fire department would have had time to put out the fire before the women and children dies in the flames. At noon, the light from the two kerosene lamps was obscured by bright sunlight. Everyone had forgotten about them except the man who carried their locations written on a scrap of paper in his pocket. He ordered the tank drivers where to crash through. Guess under which two windows. He ordered them to raise their guns, as they backed out, the guns were lowered. The video tape shows clearly the floor being raised by the [word unintelligible] a foot and a half. Guess what happened to the kerosene lamps in [word unintelligible] rooms above the tanks. A minute afterwards, black smoke started to pour out of the windows where the lamps had burned. This is the normal time needed for a kerosene fire to build up.

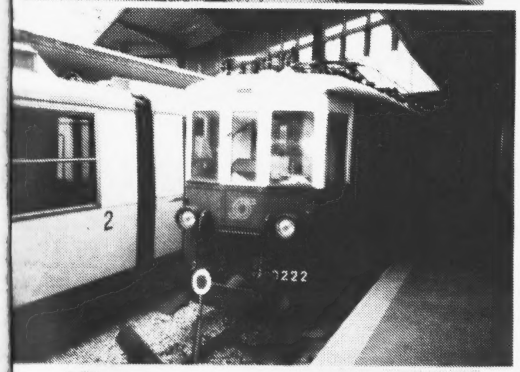
Who is policing the ATF, FBI, state troopers, county sheriffs and local police? What federal law enforcement agency investigates each and every choke hold killing committed by a police officer? Each and every beating of a drunk whether or not a passerby videotapes it? Each and every shooting of a police officer's wife who knows too much about drug kickbacks? Each and every killing at Ruby Ridge? The Gestapo accounts to no one. This is not Nazi Germany. All these people had rights. It is time for an independent federal agency to police the law enforcement agencies and other government employees.

Sons of the Gestapo
SOG

CIRCUMVESUVIANA RAILWAY (continued from page 11)

(From top to bottom:) Interior of a Circumvesuviana car. Exterior of a white-&-red Circumvesuviana train. The railway retains some of its old cars for work service; this one is parked at Naples station. The modern Naples station. Photos by the author April 4, 1995.





ballast. To speed loading and unloading, all stations are equipped with high-level platforms.

What makes the Circumvesuviana Railway particularly interesting is its rolling stock. In the mid-1970s a group of stainless steel cars was delivered from Breda which look like San Francisco area BART cars. The resemblance, especially in the front end portions, is uncanny! The slim-gauge trains are arranged in three-car semi-permanently coupled sets with all axles powered, which results in rapid acceleration. Voltage of 1500 volts DC is collected from roof-mounted Faivley pantographs rather than third rail at 750 volts. On the front and sides of the trains is the company's stylized logo which symbolizes railroad tracks encircling a mountain. It also appears on timetables and tickets.

As I rode this incredible railway, I compared it to Massachusetts' narrow-gauge Boston, Revere Beach and Lynn RR. This was an electric line that quit in 1940 after a slow erosion of ridership to automobiles and buses. While the American carrier now exists only in photographs, its Italian counterpart has grown and flourished.

Thanks to public spending, its infrastructure has been continuously upgraded. In many respects it now resembles Switzerland's top-notch meter gauga railways such as the Rhatischbahn. Modern maintenance of way equipment insures that the tracks are kept in perfect condition, and the workers show genuine pride in their company. No wonder commuter traffic is at record levels and more double tracking is taking place. Recently, additional rolling stock was purchased which incorporates a flat, non-slanted front end. Nevertheless, the BART-like vehicles will be running for many more years, allowing this regional electric line to retain its moniker, "Son of BART."

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Free Video With Your Subscription!

With your 3-year new, renewal or gift subscription to Rail Travel News, you can have a free copy of RTN's "home video", "Rails of California, Vol. One".

This video has some flaws, but it's the only film we'll ever have of the SIERRA 49ER EXPRESS, shot in 1991 a few weeks before this unusual train's discontinuance.

When we receive your remittance of only $69 for 72 issues (a bargain in itself!), plus $2 for shipping costs, we will mail you this unusual video production.

The video is available in VHS size only. It is 33 minutes in duration, in color and natural sound. An especially interesting feature of the film is a variety of wonderful train horns, including Amtrak, Southern Pacific, Santa Fe, SIERRA 49ER EXPRESS, and SP maintenance of way equipment. On the 49ER you'll see the company's own domes and rebuilt bi-level commuter cars as well as leased AMERICAN-EUROPEAN EXPRESS cars.

Don't delay—write now!

Cover "C"

Contents of video:

SIERRA 49ER EXPRESS
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SAN JOAQUINS
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